

How Can We Understand the Promise of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21?

Sixbert SANGWA • September 26, 2024

As we transition from the sobering conclusion of [Revelation 20](#), which depicted the final judgment and the casting of death and Hades into the lake of fire, we now turn our attention to the hope-filled vision of [Revelation 21](#). This new chapter, rich with symbolism and promise, invites us to contemplate the glorious future that God has prepared for His faithful after the final defeat of evil. The stark contrast between the end of [Revelation 20](#) and the beginning of [Revelation 21](#) reminds us of the profound wisdom and hope that the Bible offers us, even in the face of judgment. Let us approach this study with open hearts and minds, seeking to understand the depth of God's love and the magnificence of His plan for creation, which extends beyond the defeat of evil to the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth.

As the Apostle John's vision unfolds, [Verse 1](#) of this chapter unveils a completely renewed creation: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." This concept of a "new heaven and a new earth" echoes Isaiah's prophecy ([Isaiah 65:17](#)), reminding us that God's redemptive plan encompasses not just humanity, but the entire cosmos. This theme resonates in [2 Peter 3:13](#) and [Isaiah 66:22](#) as well. This new creation will serve as the eternal dwelling place for God's people, fulfilling the promise in [John 14:2-3](#). The absence of the sea—often a symbol of chaos and separation in ancient Near Eastern thought—points to a world of perfect unity and peace, where God's people will live in harmony with Him and each other. This harmony finds further expression in [Isaiah 11:6-9](#) and [Ezekiel 37:26-27](#).

[Verse 2](#): "I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband." The imagery of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven beautifully illustrates the joining of the divine and human realms. The city, described as a bride, symbolizes the intimate relationship between God and His people. This metaphor of marriage reminds us of God's covenant love and the joy of eternal communion with Him. This theme is echoed in [Ephesians 5:25-27](#), where Christ's love for the church is compared to a husband's love for his wife. The concept of God's dwelling with His people is further emphasized in [Ezekiel 37:27](#) and [2 Corinthians 6:16](#). The eternal nature of this communion is beautifully expressed in [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#), where believers are promised to be with the Lord forever.

[Verse 3-4](#): "Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away." These verses present a profound picture of God's presence among His people. The declaration that "God's dwelling is with humanity" fulfills the promise of Immanuel, "God with us" ([Matthew 1:23](#)). The elimination of tears, death, grief, crying, and pain speaks to the complete healing and restoration that God will bring. In our current world, marked by suffering and loss, these words offer immense comfort and hope.

[Verse 5](#): "Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." He also said, "Write, because these words are faithful and true." The phrase "the one seated on the throne" refers to God Almighty, emphasizing His sovereignty and authority over all creation. God's declaration, "Look, I am making everything new," underscores His power to renew and transform all things. This is not merely a restoration, but a complete renewal of creation. The command to "Write" given to John emphasizes the importance of recording this vision for the Church, highlighting its enduring relevance. Finally, the assurance that "these words are faithful and true" affirms the reliability and authenticity of God's promises, assuring believers of their fulfillment. This verse encapsulates the hope of complete renewal and restoration that God promises, while also emphasizing the trustworthiness of His word. It serves as a powerful reminder of God's ultimate plan for creation and His faithfulness in bringing it to pass.

[Verse 6-7](#): "Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son." The proclamation "It is done!" echoes Jesus' words on the cross ([John 19:30](#)), signifying the completion of God's redemptive plan. The offer of the "water of life" freely given is a powerful symbol of spiritual nourishment and eternal life. This imagery recalls Jesus' words in [John 4:14](#), where He promises living water that quenches spiritual thirst forever. It also reminds us of His invitation in [John 7:37-38](#), where He calls all who are thirsty to come to Him. This "water of life" represents the Holy Spirit and the abundant, eternal life that flows from a relationship with God. The promise of inheritance and adoption as God's children further highlights the intimate relationship believers will have with God, emphasizing the fullness of our salvation and the depths of God's love for His people. This theme of spiritual refreshment and eternal life is also found in [Isaiah 55:1](#), [Psalm 36:9](#), and [Jeremiah 2:13](#). The concept of believers as God's children is further reinforced in [Romans 8:15-17](#), [Galatians 4:5-7](#), and [1 John 3:1-2](#). The completeness of God's plan is also echoed in [Ephesians 1:9-10](#) and [Colossians 1:19-20](#).

[Verse 8](#): "But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." This sobering verse reminds us of the reality of judgment for those who reject God's offer of salvation. It serves as a warning and a call to repentance, highlighting the importance of faith and obedience in light of eternity. This theme is echoed in other passages such as [Matthew 25:41-46](#), [2 Thessalonians 1:8-9](#), and [Hebrews 10:26-31](#). The urgency of responding to God's grace is further emphasized in [2 Corinthians 6:2](#) and [Hebrews 3:7-8](#).

[Verses 9-14](#) describe the New Jerusalem in more detail, emphasizing its divine origin, radiance, and foundation based on the apostles:

Then one of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me: "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." He then carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a precious jewel, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The city had a massive high wall, with twelve gates. Twelve angels were at the gates; the names of the twelve tribes of Israel's sons were inscribed on the gates. There were three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. The city wall had twelve foundations, and the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb were on the foundations.

The seven angels with seven bowls represent the completion of God's judgment on earth, while the bride, described as the wife of the Lamb, symbolizes the Church in perfect communion with Christ. The great, high mountain signifies a place of divine revelation and closeness to God. The holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven represents the dwelling place of God with His people, the perfected Church, and its divine origin emphasizes God's initiative in bringing His kingdom among His people.

The city's appearance, arrayed with God's glory and radiating like jasper clear as crystal, reflects the perfect holiness and beauty of God's presence. The massive high wall represents the security and protection of God's people, while the twelve gates signify completeness and God's provision for all His people to enter. The presence of twelve angels at the gates signifies God's divine protection and guidance, ensuring that no impurity will enter the city. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates represent the continuity of God's covenant people from Old to New Testament, while the three gates on each side symbolize accessibility from all directions, emphasizing the universality of salvation.

Finally, the twelve foundations of the city wall, bearing the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, represent the apostolic foundation of the Church and signify the role of the apostles in establishing and spreading the gospel. This vivid description emphasizes the perfection, completeness, and divine nature of God's eternal kingdom, uniting elements from both the Old and New Testaments to portray the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

[Verses 15-21](#) provide specific measurements and descriptions of the city, its walls, and gates. Here is the full passage from the Christian Standard Bible:

The one who spoke with me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out in a square; its length and width are the same. He measured the city with the rod at 12,000 stadia. Its length, width, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall, 144 cubits according to human measurement, which the angel used. The building material of its wall was jasper, and the city was pure gold clear as glass. The foundations of the city wall were adorned with every kind of jewel: the first foundation is jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was made of a single pearl. The main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

The golden measuring rod represents divine standards and judgment, emphasizing that the city meets God's perfect specifications. The square layout of the city symbolizes stability and completeness, while its equal length, width, and height (12,000 stadia, approximately 1,400 miles) suggest perfection and vastness beyond human comprehension. The number 12,000 itself is significant, being a multiple of 12 (representing God's people) and 1,000 (symbolizing completeness). The wall's measurement of 144 cubits (about 216 feet) is another multiple of 12, reinforcing the theme of God's people. The materials used - jasper, pure gold, and various precious stones - symbolize the incomparable value, beauty, and purity of God's dwelling place. The twelve foundations adorned with different jewels likely represent the twelve apostles, each unique yet equally precious in God's sight. The pearl gates suggest the immense value of entering God's presence, while the street of pure gold transparent as glass emphasizes the absolute purity and holiness of life in God's presence. This description paints a picture of a city of unimaginable beauty, purity, and perfection, far surpassing any earthly splendor and reflecting the glory of God Himself. The imagery of precious stones and materials echoes descriptions in [Exodus 28:15-21](#) and [Ezekiel 28:13](#). The concept of God's dwelling place being of immeasurable worth is also found in [Psalm 84:1-2](#) and [Psalm 87:1-3](#). The idea of a city designed by God Himself is mentioned in [Hebrews 11:10](#), while the concept of believers as living stones in God's spiritual house is found in [1 Peter 2:5](#).

The concluding verses of Revelation 21 depict John's vision of direct communion with God. In this heavenly city, no temple is needed as an intermediary between God and His people. This intimate relationship is described in [verses 22-27](#):

I did not see a temple in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ***Its gates will never close by day because it will never be night there. They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. ***Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life.

The absence of a temple here signifies the direct, unmediated presence of God among His people, with the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (Jesus Christ) themselves being the temple. This represents the fulfillment of God's promise to dwell among His people, eliminating the need for any intermediary structures. This concept is also reflected in [John 1:14](#) and [2 Corinthians 6:16](#). The lack of sun or moon emphasizes the self-sufficiency of God's presence, with His glory providing all necessary illumination, as mentioned in [Isaiah 60:19-20](#). This eternal light symbolizes the end of temporal cycles and the dawn of an everlasting day in God's presence. The Lamb as the lamp reinforces Christ's role as the light of the world and the source of divine revelation, echoing [John 8:12](#).

The nations walking by this light and kings bringing their glory into the city suggest the universal nature of God's kingdom, encompassing people from all earthly nations and cultures, as prophesied in [Isaiah 60:3](#) and [Psalm 72:10-11](#). The perpetually open gates symbolize unrestricted access to God's presence and the absence of any threat or danger, reminiscent of [Isaiah 60:11](#). The bringing of glory and honor from the nations implies that all human achievements and cultural distinctives will find their ultimate purpose and fulfillment in God's kingdom.

Finally, the emphasis on purity - with nothing unclean or false allowed to enter - underscores the absolute holiness of God's presence, as described in [Habakkuk 1:13](#) and [Psalm 15:1-2](#). The reference to the Lamb's book of life reminds us that entry into this glorious city is based solely on salvation through Christ, emphasizing the central role of God's grace in our eternal destiny, as also mentioned in [Philippians 4:3](#) and [Luke 10:20](#).

These final verses paint a picture of direct communion with God, where no temple is needed as intermediary. The perpetual light from God's glory eliminates the need for sun or moon, symbolizing the end of natural cycles and the beginning of eternal day. The inclusion of nations and kings bringing their glory into the city suggests the universality of God's kingdom and the diversity of the redeemed. The emphasis on purity and the Lamb's book of life reminds us of the holiness of God's presence and the importance of salvation through Christ.

In conclusion, [Revelation 21](#) offers us a glimpse of the glorious future that awaits believers. It encourages us to persevere in faith, knowing that our present struggles are temporary in light of eternity. This chapter reminds us of God's faithfulness to His promises and the incomparable joy of eternal communion with Him. As we reflect on these truths, may we be inspired to live with hope, sharing the good news of God's kingdom with others, and eagerly anticipating the day when all things will be made new.

Looking ahead to [Revelation 22](#), readers can expect a continuation of this heavenly vision. The final chapter of the Bible will further describe the [river of life](#), the [tree of life](#), and the [throne of God and the Lamb](#). It will emphasize the [immediacy of Christ's return](#) and the [importance of remaining faithful](#). As we transition into this last chapter, we are reminded that the hope and glory described in [Revelation 21](#) are not the end, but rather the beginning of an eternal story of God's love and presence with His people.

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